Accommodations Toolkit

Clarify/Simplify/Repeat Directions: Research

This fact sheet on **clarify/simplify/repeat directions** is part of the *Accommodations Toolkit* published by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO). It summarizes information and research findings on the use of clarify/simplify/repeat directions for accessibility.[1]

What is clarify directions? Clarify directions refers to simplifying the language in directions or repeating and reading directions aloud (Elliott et al., 2009; Kuti, 2011). This accommodation is also referred to as "clarifying or simplifying language in directions in English" when used for English learners with disabilities (One Feather, 2010).

What are the research findings on who should use this accommodation? Clarify directions has benefited some students with learning disabilities (LD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Kuti, 2011), and emotional and behavioral disorders (E/BD) (Ganguly, 2010), as well as some English learners with disabilities (Kuti, 2011; One Feather, 2010).

What are the research findings on implementation of clarify directions? Four studies were located that addressed implementation issues:

- Two studies focused on the frequency of use of clarify, simplify, or repeat directions. One study found that clarify directions was one of the most frequently used accommodations on reading and math tests for students with E/BD (Ganguly, 2010). Another study found that clarify directions was one of the most frequently used accommodations for students with LD on a tenth-grade math test (Anjorin, 2009).
- One study found "clarifying or simplifying language in directions in English" was commonly provided to sixth and seventh grade English learners with disabilities (One Feather, 2010).
- Only one study (Kuti, 2011) examined the effects of clarify directions on performance. This study investigated directions being read aloud, repeated, and clarified for English learners with disabilities. The researcher found an improvement of scores for English learners with disabilities, but not to the extent that the students performed as well as students without disabilities.

What perceptions do students and teachers have about clarify directions? Three research studies examined student and teacher perceptions on the use of clarify directions.

- Special education teachers perceived clarify directions to be a testing accommodation that had an effect on academic/cognitive function (Ganguly, 2010).
- Elementary teachers also perceived that repeating and clarifying directions was a helpful accommodation for LD and students with ASD (Kuti, 2011).
- Sixth and seventh grade teachers perceived the need to clarify or simplify the language in directions in English for English learners with LD. They believed that if complex directions were not clarified that it distracted from students' abilities to demonstrate content area knowledge (One Feather, 2010).

What have we learned overall? There is a need for additional research on the use of clarify directions since the most recent study on this accommodation was conducted 10 years ago. The limited number of studies and the lack of recent data make it difficult to draw conclusions about the usefulness of this accommodation. However, based on the findings available, clarify directions is a commonly used accommodation for students with LD, ASD, E/BD, and may improve test scores for English learners with disabilities.

Footnotes

- **[1]**
  Research on clarify directions summarized here is also available in NCEO's searchable (https://nceo.info/Resources/bibliographies)*Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Bibliography (https://nceo.info/Resources/bibliographies)* and in NCEO syntheses of research from 1999 through 2017 (see summaries for: 1999-2001 (https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/TechReport34.pdf), 2002-2004 (https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/Tech45/Technical45.pdf), 2005-2006 (https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/Tech47/TechReport47.pdf), 2007-2008 (https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/Tech56/TechnicalReport56.pdf), 2009-2010 (https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/Tech65/TechnicalReport65.pdf), 2011-2012 (https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/Synthesis94/Synthesis94.pdf), 2013-2014 (https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/Report402/NCEOReport402.pdf), 2015-2016 (https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/NCEOReport412.pdf), 2017 (https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/NCEOReport423.pdf), 2018 (https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/NCEOReport423.pdf), 2019 (https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/NCEOReport433.pdf). See the reports and online bibliography for additional information about the criteria used to identify studies included in this fact sheet.

References

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